

# ARTS MAGAZINE

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### ENTRIES: FIRST NIGHTS

by Robert Pincus-Witten

Peter Halley opening aburst with the finest flower of the younger generation of painters, all turned out at International With Monument, a seemingly new art center, though it had really emerged as part of the old East Village scene. Its directors however were keenly resistant to the Expressionist values typified by the first generation and ignored Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and me when we were pulling the New Irascibles together, a portfolio that they thought (I take it) would make it appear as if they endorsed the grunge of the initial generation.

In that absence of record, International with Monument comes off as pristine Second School, one seemingly less parochial perhaps than the general run of the First Coming, though, in truth, there they were squarely in the midst of all those original expressionist untouchables. More power to them. This reluctance proved a savvy gambit as the new abstraction and conceptualist revival germane to the gallery's predispositions crisply keys into the issues of the alienated, inverted values of post-modern abstraction, values that mark not only New York Painting today but much of the European scene.

Smart abstraction. Dumb abstraction. Sunday Abstract Painting. Over The Couch Abstraction. Match The Draperies Abstraction. Amateur Abstraction. Pro Abstraction. Drift Wood Abstraction. Po/Mo. Neo/Geo. Signifiers a rebours.

Admittedly, Peter Halley, Meyer Vaisman and Jeff Koons have made International with Monument a center of extreme fascination though, with Halley gone to Sonabend and Koons and Vaisman fought over for exhibitions beyond count to be mounted at other quarters and with Vaisman waffling as to his continuing role as a dealer/founder of I with M one wonders what developments the present season will bring to the extraordinary fortunes of that gallery.

Halley's works are sprayed neon glow--hot, carcinogenic, asbestos-like, condemned schoolroom ceilings. Halley favors simple emblematic formats often of dual, twinned units that insistently recall the Tres rare tableau sur la terre of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice that once served as embossed cover to a major Picabia exhibition held at the Beaubourg (1976). This, I expect, is as far a nod as Picabia will get from Halley, if indeed it is even so much as that though currently, Picabia is as smart as you can get. Beyond this putative association Halley's computer chip-like configurations are said to trace the painter's ambivalence with regard to the transcendental emblems of early modernist abstraction. I say ambivalence advisedly insofar as Halley's thinking is still embodied in the most conventional of typologies, easel painting, and so will have a greater chance of survival after all the stylistics and critical polemics die down.